



# Step-by-Step Advice for **Crafting Digital Signage Content**

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DIGITAL SIGNAGE WHITE PAPER



# Table of Contents

<b>Increasing Engagement with the Right Content</b> .....	<b>3</b>
100 Digital Signage Message Ideas .....	3
<b>Text</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Keywords</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Images</b> .....	<b>8</b>
6 Easy Digital Design Tips for Non-Designers .....	9
<b>Movement</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Infotainment</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Automated Content</b> .....	<b>16</b>
10 Automated Messages You Should be Showing .....	17
<b>Digital Signage Profiles</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Audience Polls</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Gamification</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Interactive</b> .....	<b>24</b>
6 Tips to Guarantee People Look at Your Digital Signs .....	25
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>26</b>

We're here to help! If you have any questions about your application or our products, please contact us at **800.572.4935** or **salesteam@visix.com**.

## Increasing Engagement with the Right Content

The whole point of digital signage is to get your audience to stop, pay attention and take whatever action your message asks them to (your Call to Action). You need the right communications to engage people, and that means the right content. But the word “content” represents a large category and can mean many different things – it could be text with images, video, interactive, mobile, externally sourced, internally generated or part of a gamified campaign. You can even use certain types of content to measure the effectiveness of your digital signage while entertaining viewers.

You want to engage people – study after study shows that employees who are engaged work longer and harder; students who are engaged are more successful academically; and even members of the public report positive experiences and attitudes towards a brand when they become engaged with it. Not matter what kind of organization you have, you want people to feel like they’re part of who you are and what you do. And there’s no more powerful tool for that than digital signage.

With such a vast array of options and tools available, it might seem a daunting task to figure out which content type is best for a particular communication. What follows is an examination of different types of content to help you better decide which ones to use when.

## 100 Digital Signage Message Ideas



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|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ads for local vendors</li> <li>Alerts</li> <li>Anniversaries</li> <li>Announcements</li> <li>App download of the week</li> <li>Arts and crafts tips</li> <li>Association memberships</li> <li>Awards and honors</li> <li>Birthdays and anniversaries</li> <li>Book club picks</li> <li>Brand and product info</li> <li>Business hours</li> <li>Cable feeds</li> <li>Cafeteria menus</li> <li>Club meetings</li> <li>Community calendar</li> <li>Company milestones</li> <li>Contests</li> <li>Coupons and discounts</li> <li>CSAT statistics</li> <li>Data visualizations</li> <li>Day and date</li> <li>Department photos</li> <li>Desk availability</li> <li>Donor thanks</li> <li>Energy dashboards</li> <li>Entertainment news</li> <li>Event promotions</li> <li>Event schedules</li> <li>Facebook posts</li> <li>FAQs</li> <li>Featured travel destination</li> <li>First aid tips</li> <li>Fitness tips</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health tips</li> <li>History of the company</li> <li>Holiday closings</li> <li>“How to” instructions</li> <li>HR and benefits</li> <li>Images and graphics</li> <li>Important contact info</li> <li>Inspirational quotes</li> <li>Internships and scholarships</li> <li>Kudos and feedback</li> <li>Language lessons</li> <li>Lecture series</li> <li>Local attractions</li> <li>Loyalty programs</li> <li>Meet our team</li> <li>Meeting room schedules</li> <li>Movie times</li> <li>New employee spotlights</li> <li>News tickers</li> <li>News-in-Pictures</li> <li>Newsletter highlights</li> <li>On this day...</li> <li>Online learning URLs</li> <li>Open positions</li> <li>Out of office schedules</li> <li>Photos from company events</li> <li>Policy reminders</li> <li>Pollen count</li> <li>Polls and surveys</li> <li>PowerPoint slides</li> <li>POS updates</li> <li>Press releases</li> <li>Print marketing</li> <li>Productivity tips</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development tips</li> <li>Progress toward goals</li> <li>Queuing info</li> <li>Recipe of the week</li> <li>Recommended blogs</li> <li>RSS Feeds</li> <li>Safety tips and milestones</li> <li>Shuttle and bus routes</li> <li>Speaker bios</li> <li>Sports scores and stats</li> <li>Staff directories</li> <li>Staff/student profiles</li> <li>Stats and charts</li> <li>Stock market info</li> <li>Stock updates</li> <li>Streaming video</li> <li>Tech tips</li> <li>Test schedules</li> <li>Time</li> <li>Tips for healthy eating</li> <li>Traffic conditions</li> <li>Training tips</li> <li>Trivia questions</li> <li>Twitter feed</li> <li>Vacation schedules</li> <li>Videos and animation</li> <li>Visitor welcomes</li> <li>Volunteer drives</li> <li>Wayfinding maps</li> <li>Weather forecast</li> <li>Webpages</li> <li>Word of the day</li> </ul> |
|--|---|--|

## Text

Words are the information-carrying part of any message, so choosing the right ones is vital to effective communication. Remember that people need to be able to see, read, understand and internalize what you've written in the brief time they are exposed to the message. You want what you've written to stick in their minds, and you want to use keywords and trending vocabulary to keep your content feeling fresh.

## Legible

If people can't actually read what you've written, it doesn't matter how clever your copy is. Sans-serif fonts work better for digital formats, with high contrast between the text and the background. Many times, people will first see the digital sign at a distance, and you want them to notice it and continue to pay attention as they approach.

Tailor your font sizes to the distance you want people to start taking in your message. A basic rule of thumb is that one point of font is clearly visible from about 4 1/2 inches away, so...

- 20-point font is easily seen from 7 feet away
- 50-point from 18 feet away
- 100-point from 36 feet, and so on.

But don't use 50-point font in a small area with only seven feet of space from the display. People will also have a tough time reading font that's too large (it'll feel crowded and aggressive). And don't use all caps – it doesn't end up emphasizing anything because you're emphasizing everything. Feel free to use caps, bold or italics sparingly for emphasis. And varying font sizes in a single message can also draw the eye to something important, provided you don't overdo it.

You probably know the K.I.S.S. Rule – Keep it Short and Simple. You only have about 3-6 seconds to grab someone's attention, so the less on the screen, the better. Take a lesson from research conducted by Facebook – shorter posts there get more than 60% more engagement and almost 25% more interaction. Try to keep messages to 22 characters or less whenever possible. When aligning lines of text, use the 3x5 rule – either three lines of five words each, or five lines of three words each.

## Readable

When thinking of what kinds of sentences to use, most of your messages should use imperative statements, with declarative less often and interrogatives last. For example:

1. Download the app today. (imperative)
2. We have a new app. (declarative)
3. Do you have the app? (interrogative)

Questions are great for social media posts (where they get 100% more responses), but not so great for digital signage – people start thinking of their answer and no longer pay attention to the screen. When the next message in the playlist comes up, the opportunity to communicate your original point is gone.

Try to communicate one thing per message, or two at max. More than that is just too much for the eye and brain to handle in a short time window. If you have more to say, link three 5-second messages together to create a "story" 15-seconds long.

Don't show long lists. They just become visual noise in a digital signage message. If you do have a list, put the most important things at the top and the bottom – the middle gets muddled. This is called the serial position effect, and stats show that people remember the first and last items in a list twice as often as the things in the middle.

Avoid using your brand name in digital signage messages. Either they already know who you are, and you are wasting valuable space on the screen, or you want them to get curious and find out more about you (follow a call to action like "go to a website", for example). Plus, it comes across as marketing rather than the engaging informational vehicle you want your digital signage to be.

## Actionable

You must have a measurable call to action. An instruction like “go here now” is better than something weaker like “try it today if you’re interested”. And it’s shorter. Start your call to action with a verb, and keep the verb and object close together in the sentence (so: “order your coffee at the café” instead of “order at the café to get your coffee”). Either show your call to action the whole time or repeat it several times, so it has a chance to lock into people’s memories.

Be careful that you create a context that makes sense for your message, and consider where to place the words on the screen for maximum effect. Beware of attention vampires – you may have found a really compelling image that makes people want to look at it a while, but that means they aren’t reading your text. All they’ll remember is the image.

The message is the whole point of your digital signage, so make sure it is clear, easy to read, and all other elements on the screen are there to support the message. You aren’t making art, you’re communicating valuable information to people who are walking past your screens while doing or thinking about something else.

The best way to test out how effective your messages are is to walk around the space while talking to someone, or listening to music on your headphones, and see what you notice and remember, and what you don’t.

## Memorable

You don’t need to be grammatically complete (newspaper headline style is fine, provided it’s clear), but you do need to be grammatically accurate. Your language should be technically proficient, and there are many techniques some of the great writers have found help make vigorous and memorable writing.

The passive voice is best left unused, as it is a bit muddy. Plus, it’s invariably longer. (For example, we should have said “Don’t use passive voice.”) The human brain arranges information into groups and patterns for easy recall, so do the same with your text. Chunking information works well since it’s also how the brain codes information for storage – 545 212 897 is easier to remember than 545212897. Repetition and parallelism are very useful tools for crafting digital signage messages – things like “Do it right – do it now” or “Help us and we can help you”.

The rule of three is also good to remember. People remember things in pairs or threes even better than they do single items. Repeating particular phrases or word combinations two or three times in a row (in messages close to one another in the playlist, for example) also helps lock the phrase into short-term memory.

In order to get your content to stick in people’s minds, make use of stylistic devices used by writers of both prose and poetry:

- **Assonance** – using similar sounding vowel sounds (beat, creep) or consonant sounds (stick, stoke) in two or more words. The latter is sometimes called consonance. When using “s” or “sh” sounds, it is sometimes called sibilance.
- **Rhyme** – a repetition of similar sounds, usually in the final syllables. For example, *The time has come to have some fun, so go on and pop over to the gear shop!* There are many, many types of rhymes. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhyme>)
- **Alliteration** – using the same sound to start a series of words, or in the stressed syllables in a series of words. For example, *Pork pies – so perfect for parties!* When a sound is repeated elsewhere in several words (not at the beginning), it’s called parochesis.



- **Anadiplosis** – this is starting a new phrase or line with the last word of the preceding one. For example, *Springtime gives us grass. Grass is soft. Soft is nice. Nice people come in from the sun and buy an ice cream.*
- **Epanalepsis** – Using the first part of a clause or line at the end of the next one. For example, *History is ours and we make history.*

Similes and metaphors can also be effective if they are apt or original. Humor is also great, and English-speakers tend to remember puns (even if they don't always like them).

## Keywords

We all know that keywords are important for websites, especially SEO, but they're also an important factor in crafting digital signage messages. Most of your audience is busy doing other things when they encounter your displays – thinking about the meeting they just had, looking forward to a nice cup of coffee, or on their way to an event – and you have under three seconds to get them to slow down and pay attention. That's not much time.

Design strategies help – attractive images, high contrast backgrounds and the right amount of text. And the actual words you use can also get them to notice the screen and pay attention to your message. As any writer will tell you, choosing the exact right wording is crucial. Plus, in today's on-the-go world, where people are constantly getting information from diverse sources and devices, words tend to trend. Certain words and phrases become temporarily popular across various platforms like websites, social media sites (aided by the modern trend of hashtagging) and even news articles.

The term keyword means the terms people put in to search engines on the web when looking for, whether a single word or a string of words. These change all the time, because people's interests change, or new topics become "current", and also because the algorithms search engines use are constantly improving (and even using machine learning to leverage data being entered in real time).

## Trends

If your messages contain trending words, they are more likely to feel current, and that's what people want these days: the freshest information available. But how can you find out what they are? One obvious way is to simply pay attention. You're more than just a communications manager or content creator for digital signage, you're also an info-consumer. What words and phrases, either new or old, do you notice as you check your favorite sites and pages? Which ones catch your eye, or amuse you?

Currently, the big search engines are Google, Bing and Yahoo. Yahoo has discontinued their Yahoo Buzz analytics service, but Bing offers a Bing Keyword Research tool, as does Google AdWords.

A quick way to see what might be trending on Google is to leverage Google Auto-Complete. Just go to the main Google page and start typing something in. As you are typing your topic, Google will attempt to auto-complete your entry with the currently trending terms that start the same way. For example, typing in the word "social" recently gets us "security" first, then "media", then "media marketing" and then "network" in fourth place.

Another tip for Google is to put in your search string, then scroll to the bottom of the search results page. Google will give you a list of related keywords you can explore. So, typing in "social media", we scroll down and see the following related searches:

- What is social media used for
- Social media list
- Types of social media
- Social media examples
- Uses of social media
- Social media apps
- Social media essay
- Advantages of social media



The Auto-Complete and Related Searches will change daily, depending on what's currently trending near you. There's also a website called Keyword Tool that searches through Google Auto-Complete for you, as well as YouTube, Amazon, eBay and the App Store (<https://keywordtool.io/google>).

For more comprehensive information on keywords that are trending right now, use Google Trends (<https://trends.google.com/trends/>). There's a massive amount of data there, and you can slice the data set as many different ways as you want. Look at trends by country, or region (state to state in the US). You can compare two or more keywords to see which one is performing better.

You can also use the Google trends site to see Trending Searches on both the web and YouTube, and Top Charts. You can subscribe to Trends stories, which are compiled and emailed to you. You can also use Google Correlate, which allows you to discover words that correlate with your target word. All this data lets you see what people in your region are looking for in their daily lives and can give you some ideas for what to say on your digital signs and how to say it.

Facebook and other social media sites also offer analytical tools, though none have the comprehensive overview of Google trends. And the best thing is that it's free. A couple of other links to consider:

- Top Keywords for Pay-Per-Click divided into categories (<https://www.wordstream.com/popular-keywords>)
- Ubersuggest (<https://neilpatel.com/ubersuggest/> – a website run by Neil Patel that suggests more keyword ideas. Sort of a thesaurus for keyword phrases.
- KWFinder (<https://kwfinder.com/>) - Similar to Ubersuggest

## Vocabulary

This is always going to be the starting place for any kind of digital signage message. You want your messages to use clear and concise language, so the words you choose are important. This is especially true for message titles and headlines that need to grab your viewers' attention.

English has the largest vocabulary of any language in the world with well over a million words, and about 1000 new words are added each year to the Oxford Dictionary – that's a bit more than 19 a week. The demand for new content on the web, and the increasing number of content creators, means that there are a lot of people out there trying to capture a sizable share of the attention-market.

Honing the vocabulary you use, grabbing attention with words trending outside your facility, or seeding your environment with enticing new words can make your messages feel relevant and current.

This sometimes involves finding clever turns of phrase, resurrecting old slang, and creating neologisms, new words and phrases, that will start "trending". Sometimes these new terms become so commonplace, people wonder how they survived without them (consider the ubiquity of the verb "to google", or how everything to do with software these days is an "app"). You'll want to keep abreast of current vocabulary trends, so you don't fall out of touch with your audience. Especially with millennials and Gen Zers – they are the ones coining and popularizing much of the new vocabulary.

There are plenty of online resources you can use to explore. First off, there are the dictionaries – English is unique among Indo-European languages, in that there's no official organization that determines what is or is not "proper" English. Instead we have dictionaries, which only deal with the meanings and uses of words. The big four all keep track of trending and new words:

- Oxford – <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/category/word-trends-and-new-words/>
- Cambridge – <https://dictionaryblog.cambridge.org/category/new-words/>
- Merriam-Webster – <https://www.merriam-webster.com/news-trend-watch/see-all>
- Macmillan, who have a Buzzword blog – (<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/buzzword/entries/current-entry.html>) and a crowdsourced dictionary (<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/open-dictionary/latestEntries.html>) in addition to their blog (<http://www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/>)

Other sites also track the constantly shifting vocabulary scene, and often list new slang:

- The Urban Dictionary – <http://www.urbandictionary.com/>
- InternetSlang.com (mainly internet acronyms) – <http://www.internetslang.com/trending.asp>
- English Forums – <https://www.englishforums.com/content/resources/trending-words-in-the-english-language.htm>
- WordLo – <http://recremisi.blogspot.cz/search/label/tech%20words>

And there are plenty of blogs out there with articles full of curated data, or commentary on trends:

- Trending Words This Week at dictionary.com – <http://www.dictionary.com/e/trending-words-2018-1-18-24/>
- The Biggest Buzzwords of 2018 Revealed at The Daily Mail – <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-5248899/The-biggest-buzzwords-2018-revealed.html>
- 54 Great Examples of Modern-Day Neologisms at Vappingo.com – <https://www.vappingo.com/word-blog/great-examples-of-neologisms/>
- 30 Trendy Internet Slang Words and Acronyms You Need to Know to Fit In at MakeUseOf.com – <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/30-trendy-internet-acronyms-slang-need-know-fit/>

Using websites like these is one way to see what is currently “hot” or new in the vocabulary scene. Of course, you could always ask a millennial as well. Peppering your messages (judiciously, though) with current vocab can help make you seem relevant and current.

However, you don’t want to confuse your audience by using new terms they are unfamiliar with, unless that’s your intended “hook”. A person walking quickly past a display that has a message that says “Don’t be a lubberwort– get your reports in on time” might make people stop and look for a moment, but it’s a bit obscure and might not stick in their minds without further explanation. On the other hand, maybe it gets people talking in the break rooms (“What the heck is a lubberwort?”) and in the meantime, the real part of the message – “get your reports in on time” – is looked at repeatedly while they try to figure out what the unknown word means. (For the record, “lubberwort” is a word from the 16th century to describe an imaginary plant that caused sluggishness and stupidity, also applied to people).

Remember that your audience is a unique combination of individuals, so you can certainly test-run some terms to see what sticks and generates buzz. In fact, there’s probably a good chance you have a logophile or two in your organization (call them “word nerds” if that’s more comfortable) who already look at this sort of thing in their spare time and would love to be tasked with finding interesting and relevant new words for your digital signage content. Ask around.

## Images

The old saying says that “a picture is worth a thousand words” (first seen in 1911, attributed to newspaper editor Tess Flanders). And while it’s hard to imagine a digital signage message that is only an image with no words, a good image can certainly reinforce the message’s content and communicate substantial amounts of information.

If you want to attract people to a message about, say, an autumn special, and the content creator thinks images of pumpkins and colored leaves will grab people’s attention, don’t try to put text over imagery – simply add a nice picture next to the text. Remember that the message is the most important thing – not the image.

Pictures should be high-res and formatted to your display’s resolution or the settings of the content zone the message is in. An exploded, pixelated image looks amateurish and detracts from the credibility of the message. The same goes for an image that is stretched or squashed. It’s better to have one good high-quality image than clutter up the screen with several pictures. Consider using silhouettes and other visual hooks from time to time – they’re clean and easy to notice from a distance.

Many of the same design ideas that apply to print also apply to static digital signage messages, with one major exception: a print ad in a magazine can be looked at for a long time and so it can contain lots of information. A digital signage message is on the screen for 15 seconds or less. Keep it simple, clean and direct.



## 6 Easy Digital Design Tips for Non-Designers

Like

Review

View

### 1. CONTRAST & LEGIBILITY

Your message can get lost if the viewer can't easily separate the elements of your design. Contrast is the primary factor for legibility (especially for color-blind viewers) – poor contrast reduces legibility; good contrast improves it. Always make sure there's plenty of contrast between your background and foreground colors, especially for text.



### 2. THE 3 x 5 RULE

Words on the screen are there to communicate a clear, concise message. Don't clutter your designs with too much text. Keep the type size large for readability at a distance, and present only the most important information. Try not to use more than three lines of text of five words each OR five lines of text of three words each.

### 3. TEXT STYLES

- Unless you're duplicating a brand or logotype, keep the font simple and legible. Never use more than two fonts in a single design and use italics sparingly, as they can be hard to read from a distance. Also, large text and bold lettering can help improve readability.
- 

### 4. COLOR & PERCEPTION

Color creates good contrast, and color choices should place your foreground elements, like text, perceptually in front of your background design. To improve your designs:

- Use contrasting colors – light on dark or dark on light
- Understand what your viewer's eye is drawn to
- Control the impact of information



### 5. FOCUS TECHNIQUES

Use focus techniques to guide the eye to critical information first and create a visual hierarchy in your design. Headlines, graphics, bright colors and high contrast items will pull the eye to them. Size also tells the audience the priority of design elements, as does their arrangement, angles and open space.



### 6. PREVIEWING

When previewing your designs, consider where your eye goes first and adjust your design to ensure that the most important elements take priority. Test readability and visibility on your own monitor before publishing out to digital signs. A good tip is to stand back from your monitor at least five feet because this simulates your audience's perspective for viewing screens at a distance.

There are plenty of websites out there that offer high-quality images for free with no copyright issues. Just double-check on each image you like to see what the usage license is (if you can alter it, if you must give credit, etc.) Here are a few good websites for stock and copyright-free photos:

- <https://www.stockfreeimages.com/>
- <https://unsplash.com/>
- <https://pixabay.com/>
- <https://www.pexels.com/royalty-free-images/>
- <https://stocksnap.io/>
- <https://stock.adobe.com/>
- <https://burst.shopify.com/>
- <https://gratisography.com/>
- <https://negativespace.co/>
- <https://picography.co/>
- <https://skitterphoto.com/>
- <https://freestocks.org/>
- <https://nomad.pictures/>
- <https://www.foodiesfeed.com/>

## Take Your Own Photos

One certain way around copyright issues is to take your own pictures. Not only do you not need to worry about attributions and payment, but you can tailor the image to be exactly what you want. You can also use your own facility, and the actual people who work there or make use of it, which adds more interest for your audience.

As in all communications – planning is key. Start with the basics – what formats can you import into your content management software? Figure out exactly what you want your message to look like. Will your image be used for the background, or alongside text? What will the text say, what will the call to action be, what font will you use, where will the text be placed. Also, consider whether you'll have any bold, italic or colored text, etc. Next think of an image that could reinforce that text and call to action, or entice people to look at the screen. Then go out and shoot the image.

Try to capture as much of what you imagine as possible – the more you can get right with the camera, the easier it will be later. Don't rely too much on after effects and editing tools. Realize your vision with the camera, don't just take a picture and try to fix it later.

Shoot in the orientation you want the message to be in – aspect ratios matter. If it's landscape, then take a landscape picture; if it's portrait, then shoot it that way. If you want a portrait-orientation picture, actually rotate the camera – you will get a better-quality photo than if you take it landscape and then rotate or crop it in editing software.

## Resolution

Use the highest resolution possible – you can always shrink the image down later. Resolution is a measurement of how much visual information has been captured in the image – the more information, the higher quality the picture.

Most smartphones have pretty good cameras these days – shoot on the highest resolution you can, and try to avoid compression (compression reduces file size by eliminating some visual information). HDR equipment and settings have a lot of visual data in them, especially really dark blacks and really bright whites. If you can, shoot in HDR mode. If you don't have HD equipment, you can fake it by taking three pictures of the same thing – one at normal exposure, one underexposed (for those deep darks) and one overexposed (for bright whites); then combine them into a single image using Photoshop or other software.

## Light

Photographs are sort of paintings made with light, along with shape, texture and contrast. Things that are lit well get noticed first, and shadows can create nice contrasts and shapes for your subject to stand out against. What you don't want is pictures that are over- or underexposed.

One thing to be careful of is using a flash. Basically, you should only use it very sparingly, and never indoors. And using a flash on something that is two miles away is pointless at best and, at worst, can light up things closer to you that a camera on automatic settings will focus on, thinking they are your subject.

Using a reflector is a good idea. This is a piece of material that is black on one side and white or reflective on the other. The black side absorbs unwanted light, while the light side bounces light to fill in unwanted shadows. Many photography stores have inexpensive reflectors (including foldable fabric), but you can even just go to a craft store and get a piece of foam core board that's black on one side and white and the other for around five dollars.

When outdoors on a sunny day, there's a risk of too much light. A trick is to set the aperture to f/16 and the shutter to 1/100th second – this is called the Sunny 16 Rule. Also, around an hour before sunset or an hour after sunrise, when the light is rich yet diffused, is a very flattering light for many subjects. The exact time will vary for the time of year and your physical location. To figure out when the Golden Hour will happen for you, use this online tool: [www.golden-hour.com](http://www.golden-hour.com).

## Composition

Digital cameras may be easier to use than analog equipment, but a picture is still a picture, and there are some tried and true rules and advice on how to take good photos.

### Rule of Thirds

What's the difference between, say, something people would consider a "photograph" and a snapshot? A lot of it has to do with the way the picture is framed.

The Rule of Thirds says to imagine a grid over what you are photographing that divides the image into three rows of three boxes each, for a total of nine boxes (which is why this is sometimes called the Tic-Tac-Toe Rule). The temptation is often to put the main subject right inside that center box. But really, the eye is drawn to the corners of that center box, so you want to put your main elements at those corners, just a bit off center.

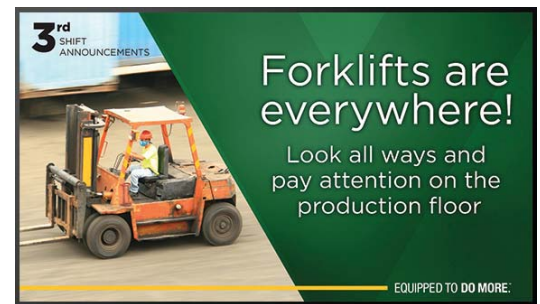
Many digital cameras have the option to use gridlines in the viewer – take advantage of this. In landscape photos, line up a horizontal element (like the horizon) with one of the horizontal gridlines, creating a more visually interesting picture. In portrait orientation, use the horizontal lines for people's eyes, or for their heads if you have multiple people in a picture. Use the vertical lines for vertical objects like trees, columns, etc.

### Leading Lines

If there are strong lines in the picture, the eye will naturally follow them – place your subject in relation to these lines so that it feels like a destination. Lines that converge create a sense of depth, while curved lines lead the eye all over the picture to finally settle on the main subject.

### Angles, Perspectives and More

Consider taking your picture from an unusual angle or from an unfamiliar perspective. A photo of a cup of coffee from the side, where you cannot see the coffee itself but maybe can see the steam rising out of it, conveys a certain feeling – morning, warmth, the start of the day, etc. A picture of coffee from above conveys different ideas – the coffee itself, texture and color, flavor, etc. It can be interesting to see how little of a subject you can include in the frame yet still get across the idea you want to communicate. Do you need to show the entire cup of coffee, or is just a bit of the cup with the handle and some steam enough? If you're using the image as message background, this also leaves you more space for text.



People like pictures of people, especially faces. And the eyes are the most important part of the face. Make sure they are along one of the gridlines in the Rule of Thirds and well lit. If you're taking a picture of a person, don't use busy backgrounds that will detract from your subject. A single color or mild texture is best – that way the human subject “pops” to the eye.

Wide-angle settings and lenses can create a real sense of depth, especially when used with a small aperture like f/16, which keeps both the background and the foreground sharp.

Study professional pictures and paintings and think about why the artists did what they did, and what works and what doesn't. What ideas or techniques can you use to make your pictures look first-rate?

### Further Considerations

- Camera shake is no good, so make sure you brace your camera well. Wrap one hand around the body of the camera, and the other around the lens casing. You can also lean against a wall or tree or another nearby sturdy object. And consider using a tripod.
- Don't use a shutter speed that is slower than the focal length. So, if your focal length is 100mm, your shutter speed should be now slower than 1/100th.
- Memory cards – it's better to use several smaller capacity cards than one large one. Things break, or go missing, and it would be terrible to lose hundreds of pictures because you had all your pictures on a single card, which then broke.
- Learn the rules of photography...so you can break them. Despite using technical equipment, photography is an art form, and you're the artist. It's good to know the general rules and tips that other photographers know, but you don't want to become a slave to them. Find your own style and always be improving.

### Internal Sources

If you are a university or school, there's a good chance there's a photography club on campus. Coordinating with teachers might be an effective way to encourage students to take the pictures you need and get class credit at the same time while simultaneously building their own portfolios. If you're a corporation, healthcare facility or government office, you might see if there are any shutterbugs on staff who would like to help out. Large organizations often hire professional photographers to take shots of people, events and facilities on site – perhaps upper management will let you use those images.

You can even gamify the search for good pictures. Run a contest for photos you know you want in upcoming messages on your digital signs with a fun prize for the winners (plus they get to see their work up on the screens). You could even leverage your social networks, soliciting pictures from fans of your pages. Just make sure the conditions of use and ownership are clear – if you don't want to pay people for their pictures, then make sure you only use the image for a limited time.

## Movement

Humans have evolved to notice things moving out of the corner of our eyes. Way back when, it was to notice potential dangers. Today, in our increasingly information-rich environments, motion attracts us to potential interests and opportunities. A playlist of just still images and text could quickly become part of the background to your audience, and all the messages lose impact. You probably want some movement on screen to create variety and excitement.

### Cinemagraphs

These are high-resolution gifs that basically show a picture with a single moving component (like a picture of a tropical beach, but the palm fronds sway slightly in a light breeze). These are a terrific way to grab and hold attention (people look and think “Wow, what a nice picture...omg, that part is moving!”) with less distraction than full video.

You can make your own, but there are a few sources out there to get some online, some of which are free to use under a Creative Commons License:

- <https://burst.shopify.com/cinemagraphs>
- <http://www.freecinemagraphs.com/>
- <https://www.dreamstime.com/stock-footage/cinemagraph.html>
- <https://www.videoblocks.com/videos/cinemagraph>

You can also use some looping video that has been designed in a comparable way – one element moving, or with very slow movements. You can see some (many of which also have high-quality photos) at:

- <https://coverr.co>
- [https://archive.org/details/stock\\_footage&tab=collection](https://archive.org/details/stock_footage&tab=collection)
- <http://www.vidsplay.com/>
- <https://www.videoblocks.com/videos/footage/slow-motion>
- <http://www.wedistill.io/>
- <https://www.motionbackgroundsforfree.com/>
- <https://www.videvo.net/>

## Video

Video is a powerful addition to digital signage campaigns. Done right, a short video can tell a whole story that first attracts and then captivates your audience, making them receptive to the actual purpose of the message – your call to action.

In fact, people are now spending more time watching digital video than they spend on social networks, and budgets for digital video are on the rise: 86% of colleges and universities have a YouTube channel, 87% of online marketers use video, 96% of B2B companies use video and 73% claim it has positive results on ROI.

Video is pervasive because it works:

- YouTube consumption doubles every year.
- Videos in emails increase click-through rates by 200-300%.
- Videos on landing pages for websites increase conversion by as much as 80%.
- Video combined with full page ads show 22% more engagement.
- Users are 64% more likely to buy a product online after watching a video.
- 65% of executives visit a website after seeing a video.
- Consumers say they feel more informed after a video, and the whole purchasing experience is more enjoyable.

The video needs to be clear, enticing and brief – again, your message is only going to be up for a short span of time, so try to keep it to 15 seconds or less. This could be anything from a high-resolution “commercial” to an animated PowerPoint.

And then there’s actual video content. This could be anything at all – a collection of slides, something curated from the web (provided copyright allows), or original video content you’ve made for a specific purpose. Video allows you to really tell a story, and this is what captivates people and gets them talking. When people talk about something they’ve seen, and share it, then that content goes “viral” – spreading throughout the digital world seemingly of its own accord.

## Shoot Your Own

Your video should look good. That doesn’t mean it has to be an expensive project – quick low-res videos are extremely popular, as they mimic homemade videos people see and love on YouTube and Vimeo. But it shouldn’t look amateurish – if it’s low res, then it needs to show that this was intentional.

And you don’t even need expensive equipment anymore – most smartphones have extremely high-quality cameras, and even some professionals are trading in expensive equipment like DSLRs for smartphone technology. And there are plenty of cheap or even free basic video editing software suites available. Remember – you aren’t making the next Spiderman movie, you’re just telling a quick story to get people interested in your message or your brand. Don’t overcomplicate it.



Should you use audio? That's probably not an option in some locations – sound bouncing around through the hallways could be distracting and annoying. But in places where people linger, like breakrooms or at elevator banks, a little sound might enhance your message. But plan on making videos that tell a story visually without sound – that way you can show them anywhere.

Don't make your video too long – even online users start clicking away after 60 seconds, and Facebook reports that the videos that get the highest completion rate and the most shares are 21 seconds or less.

### **Mix it Up**

You can spread a good video across multiple platforms. Consider making a short teaser video for display on your digital signs that drives your audience to your social media page, YouTube channel or website where they can see a longer version (with sound or music). And you have automatic ROI – if you start getting more views after a video is up on your digital signs, then you know it's working.

Seriously consider doing something comedic – over a third of digital videos watched are funny in some way. Comedy also shows that your organization doesn't take things too seriously, which appeals to younger viewers. People are more likely to remember, talk about and share something that's short and funny, and lightens their day. Another commonly-shared type of video is one that shows something cute, like the video of Teddy Bear (the porcupine that likes eating pumpkin) that was so popular a few years ago.

Because videos tell very short stories, they're perfect for long-tail campaigns. Have a character or set of characters in different situations, in multiple videos over time, and people will tune in to see what happens next.

Mix it up – no one really knows how to make something "go viral". It's a combination of hitting the right tone at the right time with the right people. One thing that is known, however, is you have to attract the power users – the networkers, the people who talk to others and who habitually share content. Have some videos that are funny, some that are cute, and some that are just beautiful to look at, and you're sure to get people interested.

Over 65% of markets are increasing their video budgets, so they must be on to something. With just a little planning, you can incorporate short, enticing video content into your digital signage deployment, and get your audience engaged.

### **Attractors**

Video is not the only sort of motion available to you. We know that motion captures attention – human beings are hardwired to notice things moving in their immediate surroundings. Combining still images, videos and other elements with a little movement is a sure way to keep your playlists fresh and interesting.

Animated icons for weather can attract the eye. You might also show a cable TV feed in one zone of your layout, and perhaps a moving ticker across the bottom or top of your screen. Having a moving ticker can attract people while also conveying quite a lot of information. We're used to seeing tickers on news channels, and audiences tend to gravitate to the familiar. People will often see the motion of the ticker, turn to look at it, and stop to read more as it scrolls into view – this means they're likely to also look at other messages that are on screen at that time.

But keep in mind – moving text takes two to ten times longer to comprehend than still text, and the faster it's moving, the harder it is to understand. Interestingly, text that fades in and then out, as opposed to scrolling, is easier to recall later. So, be smart with your ticker effects and speed.

A perfect digital signage deployment uses both still and motion images. A playlist of only still images becomes boring, but a playlist that is always full of moving, jiggling, spinning items can quickly become tiresome. Imagine walking past a screen with animated weather icons, a video playing, another zone with a cable news channel, and a ticker scroll going across the bottom. It would become the visual equivalent of white noise, and possibly alienates viewers. Mix both kinds of messages in a judicious and thoughtful way that maximizes each message's impact.

## **Infotainment**



Organizational communications can be dull and drab and quickly become part of the background noise. Adding entertaining and fun messages to your digital signage playlists helps keep people interested, so they will continue to look at your messages in the hopes of getting a little nugget that has no ulterior motive.

We're talking about pure entertainment here – not an amusing way to get across an important company-oriented message, but things unrelated to your business that are interesting to your audience. It lets them know that you understand that they're more than just employees, or clients or potential customers – they're human beings with interests and hobbies and lives outside the company.

Think of it as adding an infotainment feature to your digital signage. Target your entertainment messages to particular interests – think about what sorts of things people in your facility like to do. Are they big social media users? Display today's top and trending tweets from around the country. Do they love music? Throw up the current Billboard charts. Maybe they follow the financial markets, so you can show stock tickers and top performing companies. And you almost certainly have some sports fans walking around – show standings and stats for their favorite teams.

Of course, you can always loosely tie the outside interests to your company or culture, but make sure it isn't a direct plug for your services or products. We're talking about value-add – topics that will engage your viewers, so they are more likely to look at your screens and see your other corporate messages alongside these entertaining themes.

How do you know what your audience is interested in? The most direct way is to simply ask them. This could be as simple as managers chatting with people and taking note of what they like, or you could make it more formal and send out a poll or survey. Tell them what you're planning – whatever the top ten things people say appeal to them will get displayed on your digital signage system.

Obviously, the main purpose of your digital signage is to display targeted messages about things that are relevant to your organization. So, don't overload your playlist with too much fun stuff – one message in every six or seven should be enough.

Here are some ideas for fun, entertaining messages you could display:

- Film – top grossing movies, coming soon features and future release dates
- TV – television ratings, critics top choices
- Sports – Local and favorite team standings, upcoming game dates and times, photos from recent games
- Music – top of the charts, upcoming local concerts, album release dates and critic reviews
- Finance- Market trends, stock movements, top performing companies and industry leader profiles
- Current Events – news tickers, top stories from a neutral source (like the BBC, AP or Reuters)
- Food – recipes, food trends, spotlights on local restaurants
- World – Photo of the day
- Travel – destination spotlights, travel deals
- Trivia – questions on several topics with answers to follow in a subsequent message, local trivia nights
- Health – exercise tips, pollen count and local health conditions, allergy awareness, local marathons and health events
- And More – amusing memes, customer service tips, safety advice, various top five lists, short videos on assorted topics, animal and nature images and facts, etc.

Remember that these messages are supposed to be fun, so make them visually exciting. High-quality photos always grab attention, as does video, and everyone loves easy-to-read bullet lists. The more visually appealing the message is, the more



attention it will attract.

By including value-added messages that are targeted to your audience's interests, you create a more well-rounded digital signage strategy, and can attract and engage more viewers. This lets your audience know that you're considering more than just your company goals, but see them and your organization, as part of a bigger world. A world that is fun to engage with.

## Automated Content

You need some eye candy to draw your viewers in. One of the most popular things you can put on screen are automated feeds. These can be pulled in from applications like calendars, or fed by external sources like weather apps, or purchased as content subscriptions.

There are a wide variety of automated content subscriptions you can choose from. It really depends on what your audience's interests are, and what you think will grab their attention and be useful to them:

- News-in-pictures
- Stocks and finance
- Social media
- Community calendar
- Flight status board
- Healthy living tips
- Inspirational quotes
- Local health conditions
- Sports scoreboards
- Traffic conditions

Not only is automated content eye-catching, it's hands-off. Once a feed is set up, you don't have to do anything further – it automatically updates on screens without any user intervention.

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### News-in-Pictures

These subscription-based feeds show a large picture with a headline, and are specifically designed for 4:3 and 16:9 content blocks on digital signs. Choose from news, entertainment or sports, or combine all three to grab different types of viewers. The content is royalty-free and family-friendly.

Your digital signage has to show things people care about, and current news is one of the best attractors. It grabs viewers, so they'll check screens frequently and see your other messages. There are three options for showing news feeds: tuner cards to show cable TV channels, streaming content, and news-in-pictures.

There are several problems with showing cable TV and streaming feeds, because you can't control or filter what they show:

- Commercials cloud the content being presented
- Stations or streams might show inappropriate content for your environment
- Audio is rarely set up well
- You're dependent on the TV news ticker

News-in-pictures is a better solution. It's a simple feed has vibrant HD photos with news headlines summarized in a short sentence. It's perfect for digital signage because it's designed for audiences on the move:

- News items are curated so you don't have to worry about inappropriate content
- No commercials
- You don't have to rely on audio for people to get the facts
- It's designed specifically for digital signage

A team of editors chooses news items that are suitable for public display in any organization, and all of the media is fully-licensed, so you don't have to worry about copyrights or royalties.

# 10 Automated Messages You Should Be Showing

**NEWS HEADLINES**  
We all want to stay connected to the world. Be sure to show breaking news as it happens. You can pull this in from an RSS feed or publish curated news-in-pictures on screens.

**CURRENT TIME**  
How many times a day do people look at the clock? This is the number one attractor you can include in your screen layout to make sure people are checking your displays often.

**DAY AND DATE**  
Just like the time, the date and day of the week are always in demand. If people check screens frequently to see this info, they'll also see your other messages.

**WEATHER**  
People always want to know about the weather. Update your audience with beautiful, animated weather and forecasts, or show current weather conditions in your tickers.

**EVENT SCHEDULES**  
Every organization has meetings and events. People want to know what's happening, when and where. Keep them updated with schedules from your digital signage system or calendar app.

**FINANCIAL DATA**  
Financial feeds let you stay on top of real-time market fluctuations. You can show a specific company stock, the day's top gainers or losers, or current stats for NASDAQ, NYSE and S&P 500.

**RSS FEEDS**  
Many websites offer free RSS feeds for industry-specific articles, local news, sports, business, health topics and entertainment. Show off the latest RSS posts as messages or tickers.

**SOCIAL MEDIA**  
Today's most successful communications promote inclusion. Build community and participation in social networks by incorporating posts or pages into your digital signage strategy.

**DATA TABLES**  
Data drives decisions. You can show live data using Excel and XML to feed digital signage messages. Anything you can put into a table can be put into your playlist.

**WEBPAGES**  
You're already keeping your athletics page, building map or intranet page updated online. Why recreate it? Show any webpage on your digital signs. When it's updated online, it's updated on screens.

Best of all, news-in-pictures feeds are live and automatically refreshed without your content creators having to do a thing. You simply point to a URL on the web and enjoy engaging, automated content on your screens throughout the day.

With news-in-pictures, you can customize your feed topics, dwell time on screen, the number of news items you want to show and more. This is far more engaging than just a person sitting at a desk, reading a teleprompter.

## Financial Feeds

We've all become more aware of the markets and their impact on the overall economy and our livelihood. Even if your employees don't need stock market data for their jobs, everyone will be interested in how your own company's stock is faring, as well as stocks making up their 401K portfolios.

You can show streaming feeds on digital signs to show a single stock or follow the top 100 of the day. Track activity on NASDAQ, NYSE, S&P 500, as well as the top gainers or losers – all from a single URL that you just plug into your content management system.

Red and green arrows give instant cues as to how your top stocks are performing, and you can customize the look and feel of the information by choosing various design themes. Since feeds are available in 4:3, 9:16 and 16:9 resolutions, you can display them in any standard content block. If markets are your main focus, you can even customize your layout to spotlight financial data.

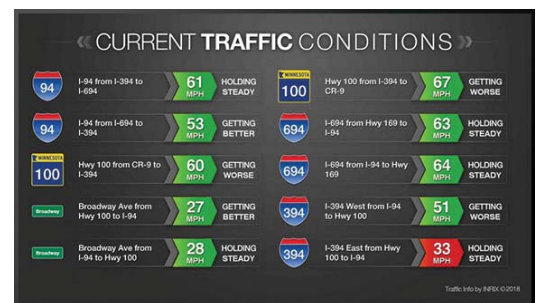
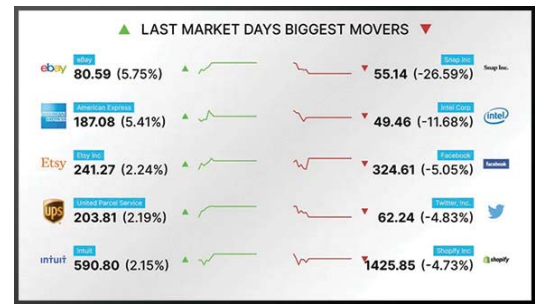
You have the freedom to set how long particular data stays on screen, so you can mix it into your overall visual communications strategy, or keep it front and center all day long.

## Social Media

Social media is a "must have" for any modern organization. Not just because everyone is doing it, but because there are real, measurable communication benefits to having a social media presence:

- Drive targeted traffic
- Target and retarget posts
- Share posts to inspire dialogues
- Increase exposure and widen your audience
- Build brand loyalty and trust
- Create real relationships with the audience
- Boost SEO and SERP rankings
- Useful in generating leads and sales
- Audiences for ads can be customized
- Inexpensive (often free) portals
- Higher conversion rates
- Efficient tool for organizations of all sizes and types

The fact is your competitors are certainly using social media, so it can be conspicuous if you don't, affecting perception of your brand. And your audiences, regardless of who they are, already use social media every day.



Departures			Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson Intl (ATL)		
Destination	Flight	Airline	Departure Time	Gate	Status
Albany	2928	DELTA	10:02 AM	C36	On Time
Albuquerque	955	DELTA	9:49 AM	A24	On Time
Allentown	4814	DELTA	10:04 AM	D06	On Time
Anchorage	5245	DELTA	5:00 AM		Nov 6:30 AM
Anchorage	256	ALASKA AIR	7:35 AM		On Time
Archie	582	DELTA	10:14 AM	T06	Nov 10:09 AM
Asheville	2661	DELTA	8:30 AM	C42	Nov 8:25 AM
Augusta	5339	DELTA	8:10 AM	D12	On Time
Augusta	5182	DELTA	10:20 AM	C33	On Time
Austin	681	spirit	8:00 AM	Term N - E8	On Time
Austin	2442	DELTA	8:25 AM	A16	Nov 8:20 AM
Austin	2844	DELTA	9:15 AM	C10	On Time
Austin	2078	DELTA	10:03 AM	B05	On Time
Baltimore	5739	DELTA	6:05 AM	C21	Nov 6:04 AM
Baltimore	1521	DELTA	7:15 AM	A32	Nov 7:10 AM



Since modern communications is about giving the audience a more consumer-like experience, having a comprehensive social media strategy helps weave your brand into the fabric of their lives.

So, you ought to be on at least a few of the most popular social networks. But that's not enough. You need to advertise your social media activity to promote your posts, gain followers and build community. If you have digital signs – the answer is right there on the wall. All the benefits of social media get amplified if you tie your social networks into your digital signage system.

## **Customized**

With a social media subscription, all of the top social media channels can be integrated into your digital signage layouts:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Pinterest
- Tumblr
- Google+

How you display your social media content is highly customizable. You can show just the text of a post, text and a picture (which has far more value than just text), or just a photo. You choose the font color (any color with a hex code will work) to mesh with your brand color scheme, as well as the post color, and can even choose different colors for hashtags to make them really stand out. There are ten built-in web fonts to choose from, and you can import any font you like.

And you can play YouTube videos on your digital signs. Get people interested enough to go see the full-length video by displaying a screenshot or a ten-second clip, or play the whole thing. And for both videos and posts, you can choose the aspect ratio (16:9 usually looks best). If you are using interactive touchscreens and kiosks, you might alter the aspect ratio to encourage people to scroll through as a hook, getting them involved and thus interested in the content.

No matter which network you're showing, you can use any of the attractive default backgrounds, or upload your own background image (just make sure it's not too busy or distracting). In addition, you can add banners that are displayed above your social media posts and videos, in any color you choose. These are great for drawing attention to an important piece of information, like where an event is happening or a deadline. If you have a hashtag campaign, all relevant posts can have that hashtag displayed in a banner above the social post to really fix it in people's minds. Banners are also great for really emphasizing your call to action.

## **Controlled**

You can moderate and fine-tune your social media offering with the filtering and analytics that come with a social media subscription. Make certain messages public or private and add rules for when they're displayed. For example, you may have a post about the TacoTime Food Truck that's coming on Friday, but representatives of Burrito Burro, a competitor, are coming to your facility and you don't want them to see the post. Simply go into your dashboard and make it private while they're in the building.

The thing about social media is that anyone can see and comment on your content. You can protect your feeds by whitelisting certain users or blacklisting others. You can even permanently block certain users and keywords, so they never show up on your digital signage screens. And the adult filter can also come in handy to block inappropriate language and content.

The subscription analytics help you look under the hood and see how posts are performing (this is especially useful for organizations that show social media on interactive touchscreens). See which posts were the most clicked on, who the most influential contributors are, and the total number of impressions for Twitter and Instagram. You can sort by date range, feed, or even by network or hashtag.

And in the spirit of computing on the go, there's a mobile app that lets you approve or reject content in real time from anywhere, so you don't even need to be in the office to manage your feeds.



Social media is a dynamic way to extend your brand and start a conversation with your audience. So, it makes sense to adapt your social media to the unique opportunities your digital signage offers with a social media subscription. Your content will shine as never before as you increase the reach of your content, and really get people talking.

## Webpage Messages

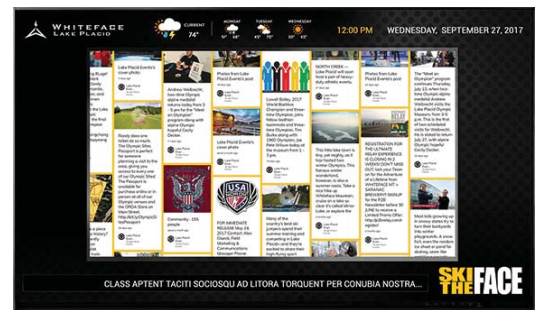
You've already put in lots of time making a beautiful website with tons of informative things on it – so why duplicate your work by making messages with the same information for your digital signage? Simply capture any online content as webpage messages and feed them directly to your screens.

Share anything that's on your homepage, or any part of your website. Add important or recent intranet pages for internal communications – that way you can be sure that people have seen the latest news in your organization.

Web-based collaboration sites like SharePoint can also be shown on your displays. And online calendars, like Google Calendar, can be configured to display upcoming events, and important dates and deadlines, around your facility.

Go beyond your own online presence by displaying local traffic maps with real-time updates, so people can plan their commutes. Adding public transportation maps and schedules reaches those who didn't drive that day and might even encourage them to leave the car at home next time. Displaying weather maps and forecasts from NOAA or other public websites lets people know what's coming and allows them to prepare accordingly.

There are over 1 billion websites on the world wide web today. You just need to choose what you want to show, point your digital signage software to it, and share it on your displays.



## Digital Signage Profiles

A recent study shows that people check their phones over 150 times a day, and an earlier study revealed that seeking information, especially about yourself, releases dopamine in the brain. People want to see themselves on a screen.

Over half of millennials feel that technology has improved their relationships, and 73% say that technology gives them a better work-life balance. This new generation is the fastest growing segment of the workforce (by 2025, over 75% of workers will be millennials), make up the vast majority of university students, and their children (Generation Z, who are even more tech-savvy) are currently enrolled in K-12 schools.

There's much talk these days of using digital signage to provide a more "consumer-like experience" to people, and since one of the ways people use technology is to see themselves and others, your digital signage messages can tap into this trend. One way to do this is to display profiles on your digital signs.

When you think of profiles, you probably think of people. You may already show welcome messages for visitors or new members of the team, but what about everyone else? Highlight everyone, from department heads down to the custodial staff. These can be on anniversaries, or just in the regular playlist rotation. For profiles of people, consider including:



- A picture – A clear picture that lets people recognize the person being profiled; portrait orientation is preferable. You could also include baby pictures or casual shots that show the person outside of work. More personal content helps people connect to the profile.
- Professional data – Their name, job title, maybe something about what they do in your organization; could include recent milestones or awards, or current projects they're working on.
- Personal data – Where they grew up, what neighborhood they live in, their hobbies and interests, if they have pets, etc. Seeing that Rick Deckard is the head of the IT department could possibly be interesting to others, but the fact that he collects vintage science-fiction magazines, or that he loves action movies, is likely to be interesting to more people. Suddenly Rick isn't just a department head, he's a person. You could even get a quote from him to use, or include the punchline to his favorite joke, or have him write a ten-word bio.

You can color code backgrounds for profiles – use one color that is used for nothing but spotlight messages – or you could color code according to department, or years with the organization or using other criteria.

And you don't have to lead with the professional information. If, for example, you find that a group of people who work for or with you are avid wine drinkers and collectors, you might consider grouping all of them together, emphasizing this aspect of their lives first, with professional information after.

By including messages like these in your digital signage playlists, you humanize your organization, showing people that they have things in common with others besides working for the same company or going to the same school. By highlighting a specific individual, you also remind people about that person's area of expertise. If you display the profile of a volunteer, you not only let people know who that person walking around the facility is, but you also remind them that there are volunteer opportunities available. In fact, the next message in your playlist might be about just that.

Of course, you want to spotlight people not put them on the spot, so always allow people to opt out of having a profile message about them. And allow people who don't mind being on display to edit the information about them before putting the message up on electronic signs. The whole idea is to have something fun that connects people, not to be intrusive.

You don't have to limit yourself to people, however. Products and services can also get a profile. Even items and equipment available on site can get a mention – how many people know about the new vending machine or the high-speed color printer?

Even a location can get attention. Many hospitals and schools have buildings names after someone – who was that person? All the students know they go to Lawrence Cook Middle School, but how many of them know who Mr. Cook was or why the school is named after him? And what about mascots – why is the school's mascot the mustang, and who was the artist who drew it?

Mascots or characters for various initiatives can get their own spotlights, as if they're people. Maybe you have a healthy eating initiative and your mascot is an ear of corn, or a smiling leaf represents your green initiatives. Let people know about this character with profile messages.

In fact, personifying things like mascots, and even products, equipment, series and the like can help make these things seem friendlier and more accessible. Instead of just a message that says, "We have a new widget", word it as "Meet our new widget". Available software and apps can also get highlighted in this way. Anything can have a profile.

Creating profiles for people and things associated with your organization adds a personal touch that is certain to be appreciated. It helps build a sense of community, and lets people know about important and interesting aspects of where they are and what the organization offers. Most importantly, it connects people to others through familiarity and common interests. Rather than being alienating and impersonal, technology can help weave an organization of any size into a cohesive whole.

### Audience Polls

After spending all this time coming up with all sorts of varied, interesting content, you still don't know if your audience really notices. So ask them – use your digital signs to poll them.

You may already be using audience response systems in your meetings and presentations, or in school classrooms. These are hand-held remote devices that let the audience respond in several ways by pressing buttons – yes/no, true/false, multiple choice, open answer, etc. These answers then get collated and displayed, allowing further discussion. You can also see a version of this on popular competition television shows like “American Idol”, where the audience votes in the final rounds by using a toll-free telephone number, texting, or an online webpage. But how can you do this on digital signs?

Your audience already has hand-held remote devices – smartphones, tablets, etc. As your call to action, ask them to text a response SMS to a specific number you've set up. This could be done for a number of things, like surveys (“How's the new cafeteria menu?”), choice polls (“Should Fridays be casual dress days?”), silent auctions (people text their bids and the current next bid price is displayed in real time on your screens), post-training comprehension checks, pledges for fundraisers or participation in special events – just to name a few.

There are many online polling providers, many of which are free or very affordable. They then give you the data they've received, and you can act on it, or display it as a simple message, a graph or chart, a word clouds, or any of a number of interesting formats.

And you aren't limited to SMS messages. You can incorporate Twitter, or even specific webpages people access using a browser (you provide a short URL or QR tag in your message, so your audience can access it right then and there.) They just log on and leave their comments.

Using web-based response methods, you can poll your audience anywhere they are – across the building, throughout a campus, or even in different cities and states, or other countries. It doesn't matter, because the data gets collected in real time. You can allow people to respond anonymously, or track individual responses, building up a database of who is paying attention and interested.

You're not just pushing content out to your audience anymore, you are creating a two-way dialogue that has immediate results. It's a fast way to see ROI, and studies show that people pay more attention when they know they are going to be asked a question. Universities have found that knowledge retention increases when they have polling systems in place as well. And you have all the response data saved, so you can analyze it at your leisure, allowing you to fine-tune future polls and communications.

Plus, it's fun. How exciting for people to walk through a space, seeing beautiful digital signage messages, and then being asked a question and given a fast and uncomplicated way to answer it. It changes their perception of your organization – they feel valued and like they, too, have a stake in things.

### Gamification

Gamification is using things we normally associate with games – like a set of rules, competition and rewards – to get people interested. When people play games, they have fun. So, when people interact with your message or brand to reap the benefits (after all, you can't win if you don't play), it feels like their own idea and something they want to do.

Now, think of gamification for your digital signage. You've already created beautiful, well-crafted messages to inform and engage your audience, but how do you know if it's working? Because people must interact with your messages to “play”, there's already built-in ROI. The more people participate, the more effective your message is.

People across all markets are starting to explore ways to gamify their digital signage messages:

1. Create your game – make sure it aligns with a goal.
2. Advertise it on your screens, along with instructions and rules.
3. Show progress on screens using easy-to-read graphics and leaderboards.
4. Recognize winners and prizes throughout the facility, encouraging others to participate in future games.

The incentives need to be tangible and attractive. Things like prize drawings, food trucks for a special department lunch, and discounts at local or on-site venues are all things people would like.

Some companies create a progressive system, with winners receiving points they can accumulate over time that can eventually be traded in at a virtual “shop” for real-world prizes and rewards.

Here are some specific ideas for gamification in various markets. But take a look at all of them – what works in one market might also work in another. Always think of who your specific audience is, what might appeal to them as a prize, and what behavior you are trying to encourage.

## Corporate

- Get employees to enroll in the benefits program by offering raffle prizes within a specified time limit, or until your enrollment goals have been met.
- Spur competition by showing progress towards quotas for the sales team. Offer rewards for first to reach quota, largest sales numbers in a quarter, etc.
- Get your employees actively using your social media sites by offering prizes or points to those who post and share relevant and interesting items on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social networks your company is using.

## Government

- Rewards can be intangible as well – offer teams a casual Friday dress code or similar benefit for reaching target satisfaction ratings for customer service.
- Encourage conservation of resources by displaying current usage stats vs. goals for energy use and recycling.
- Increase participation in community activities like blood or food drives by showing current progress towards goals in easy-to-read graphs.

## Healthcare

- Devices like FitBits already use gamification to encourage specific behavior. Have FitBit challenges for individuals and teams on staff, with an appropriately healthy reward.
- Gamification can also target your visitors. Have interactive games available for patients and visitors, especially children, to make their time in your facility less stressful.
- Touchscreens or webpages can feature online nutrition quizzes, with the prize being a free health screening – good for both staff and visitors alike.

## GAMIFICATION TIPS

- Focus on the goal
- Publish clear rules and instructions
- Make it simple for people to participate
- Offer great prizes
- Generate buzz
- Show progress on your digital signs
- Reward levels of achievement
- Don't make it too easy OR too difficult
- Don't delay rewards

## Higher Education

- Create prize drawing for signing up to and downloading the school app. Each person who does this is entered in a raffle, with an enticing prize (such as a discount card for the café or the bookstore). This could be one time, or weekly until your target numbers are hit.
- Snapshot capture – take a picture with your phone of the school mascot and show it at the bookstore for a 5% discount. Limited time offer. It could be the mascot, or any other iconic image. The image could be hidden in different messages or moving around the screen in a video.
- Have a school-wide scavenger hunt, with locations and clues in your digital signage messages. This is a fantastic way for new students to get oriented on campus.

## Hospitality

- Get valuable feedback from your visitors by offering discounts for on-site services in exchange for filling out comment cards and giving online ratings and reviews.
- Use your digital signage screens to have a fun scavenger hunt for groups – it helps them learn what you offer and how to get around your facility.
- Offer rewards for signing up to your loyalty programs within a limited time period.

## K-12 Schools

- Get kids reading with a graduated reading challenge, with prizes awarded at each tier of achievement.
- Start training the students to be digital citizens by giving them hands-on experience creating and designing digital signage messages. Gamify it by having students vote for the best design.
- Show the schools ranking in the district, county and state, as well as awards and accomplishment by students and student groups. Sometimes, the reward is simply knowing that you and your peers are doing well.

## Manufacturing

- Increase efficiencies by using data visualizations to show progress towards production or delivery goals.
- Increase participation in safety training courses by offering points for completed modules that can be accumulated and used to “buy” prizes.
- Make sure everyone knows who’s who in both the office and the factory floor by gamifying employee profiles.

These are just a few ideas for ways to get people doing what you want them to do and making it fun with gamification techniques. You’ll get increased participation and engagement and have immediate ROI data on the effectiveness of your campaigns.

## Interactive

Both still and motion messages are passive, meaning that all the audience can do is look at it and then maybe follow through on a call to action. But today’s world is a connected one, and people are used to being able to search for information they want, and that means interacting with your messages.

The fact is, even though you may currently have only static displays as digital signs, you’re going to have to start including interactive touchscreens sooner or later. As more and more organizations do this, it’s becoming expected, and places that don’t have interactive capabilities will begin to look old-fashioned and out of date.

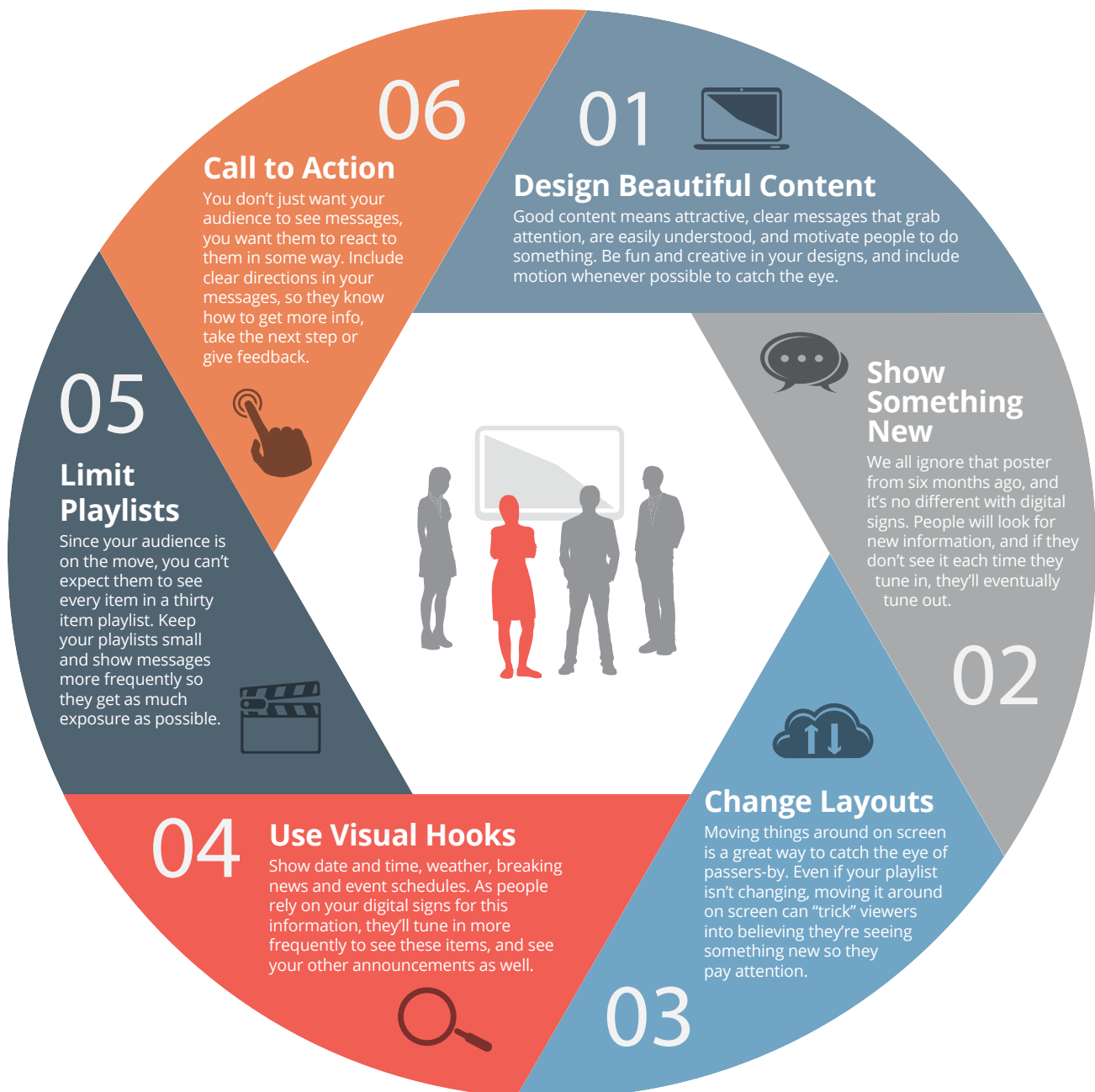
## Touchscreens

Interactive content can be just about anything – wayfinding and directories, links out to webpages and websites, room booking screens, alumni and donor boards, menu boards that show not just what’s on offer but also nutritional and allergy information, and many other possibilities. Extremely large amounts of information can be accessed using interactive kiosks, but it isn’t overwhelming to the audience because they are in control of what they see and when they see it.

There's a lot of talk these days about giving people a more "consumer-like experience", and what consumers today do is use mobile devices to interact with everything from news sources and local information guides to local transportation and entertainment venues. Interactive displays give them that same type of experience, which is already familiar and valued.

You can combine interactive capabilities with still and motion digital signage, providing your audience with everything they might possibly need or want. As in all communications, the medium should be tailored to the message, so decide which works best where. See our *Touchscreens for Audience Engagement* white paper for more about interactive signage: <https://www.visix.com/touchscreens-for-audience-engagement/>.

## 6 Tips to Guarantee People Look at Your Digital Signs



### Mobile

If interactive is the next step, the step after that is mobile. People already use their mobile devices all the time, and everywhere they go has wifi. Literally anything with a screen can be a digital sign, and that includes the screens people already carry with them – smartphones, tablets and laptops.

Allowing people to access your messages from their mobile devices means that they always have your digital signage with them – whether they're in front of your display or not. Depending on your system, you can push messages out via RSS, or use an app to let people see your playlists. Whichever method you offer, it should be opt-in and easy to use. If people have to tap their screen more than three times to get what they need, they'll likely abandon it.

### Conclusion

Digital signage is so much more than just an electronic replacement for posters. It's such a flexible, dynamic communications tool, that the variety of content you have at your disposal is truly vast. Choosing what to show – where, when and in what format – requires a combination of knowledge, planning, communication and design skills:

- Know your audience and their interests
- Balance static with motion on screens
- Use good basic digital design techniques
- Pay attention to and include current trends
- Include imperative language and calls to action
- Automate and gamify your content
- Provide a consumer-like experience
- Always monitor, measure and adjust

The right text with the right images can have an incredible impact on viewers. Remember that form always follows function in design – the message is the purpose – not only to convey information, but to inform, excite and engage your audience.

Want to learn more? Contact us at [salesteam@visix.com](mailto:salesteam@visix.com)